



## United States Senate

March 31, 2020

The Honorable Andrew Wheeler  
Administrator  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Wheeler:

I write to express my concern regarding the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) recent rollback of environmental rules. While I understand COVID-19 presents a challenge unlike any public health crisis in modern times, I believe rolling back emissions standards for vehicles and relaxing important monitoring and reporting standards during this pandemic is a serious error. Given the respiratory nature of COVID-19, I believe it is more important than ever to improve air quality, and I urge EPA to work in a collaborative fashion with state and local partners to do so.

In its March 26, 2020, COVID-19 Situation Report, the World Health Organization reiterated that those with pre-existing medical conditions, such as chronic respiratory disease, "are at risk for severe disease" from COVID-19. As the United States attempts to combat this respiratory illness, I find it difficult to understand why EPA released guidance on the very same day to broadly relax enforcement measures intended to protect the respiratory health of Americans.

Specifically, EPA's Assistant Administrator for Enforcement and Compliance Assurance provided broad EPA enforcement discretion to "All Governmental and Private Sector Partners" retroactively to March 13, 2020, for the duration of this pandemic—an unknowable and indefinite timeframe. Rather, a more targeted approach based on science and outlined by expert agencies, like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, seems merited in instances where regulated facilities are unable to meet environmental standards due to the effects of COVID-19. For example, emissions monitoring is often done electronically and

requires little human-to-human contact, allowing for needed social distancing to continue. Critical regulations like this must remain in place.

Reports also indicate that EPA, working with the Department of Transportation, intends to move forward on its proposal to roll back the aggressive emissions standards Congress has mandated for light duty vehicles. Again, I believe this is a serious misstep, and EPA's own scientific advisory panel stated the technical analysis underpinning the rule contained "significant weaknesses" and would increase costs for Americans. I ask that you allow California's tailpipe emissions standards to continue unimpeded, given California's efforts to protect public health by reducing emissions from cars and trucks—which account for 40 percent of the state's emissions—and improve air quality for my 40 million constituents.

As the United States confronts a respiratory pandemic, I urge EPA to redouble its efforts to improve air quality and to actively support states' efforts to achieve long-term air quality goals. I urge you to reconsider EPA's recent actions weakening these essential efforts.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

DF/rs/ab